GUIDE TO BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

1990

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Province of British Columbia

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"Building on Excellence Together"

GUIDE
to
BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

The Government of British Columbia has adopted the following Mission Statement for students, parents, teachers and everyone involved in education in the province:

The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.

Volume I - Secondary **January 1990**

Acknowledgments

The 1989/90 revision of the Secondary Accreditiation material is a result of the following contributions:

- the experience of the teachers, administrative officers and district officers associated with the 25 pilot schools.
- responses from external teams, chairpersons, administrative officers, district administrative officers, superintendents, and Ministry of Education staff.
- responses from the following Ministry branches: Special Education, Curriculum Development, Native Indian Education, School Facilities, and Modern Languages.
- the advice of the Provincial Revision Committee.

The Ministry of Education appreciates and acknowledges these contributions.

Provincial Revision Committee

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Program Effectiveness Branch

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This revision has benefited from close collaboration with the developing elementary accredition revision managed by Mr. Ken McCulloch. The cooperation between the two programs has been of great mutual assistance.

The previous Manager of Secondary Accreditation, Larry Gray, did much of the formative work for this project. The project also had the benefit of former Superintendent of Schools Harry Sayers' experience, knowledge and writing skills; his help is gratefully acknowledged.

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Glossary of Terms

Accountability	The responsibility for carrying out an obligation or trust. Accountability in a school system implies exchanges of information and explanations between schools and their various publics.
Action Plan	The plan developed for each school priority for improvement.
School Growth Plan	The aggregate of the school's action plans.
Constituents	The students, teachers, support staff, parents, and others directly involved in the school's operation.
Community	All members of the community in which the school is located.
Assessment	The systematic process of gathering information.
Evaluation	The ongoing process of making judgments and decisions based on the interpretation of evidence gathered through assessment.
Goal	A broad educational direction. The Ministry's goals are the Intellectual, Human and Social, and Career Development of students.
Objective	A desired result which can be expressed in measurable terms.
Mission/Philosophy Statement	A brief statement of purpose focusing on students. The Ministry's Mission Statement is found on the cover of this guide.
Portfolio	A collection of samples of student work .

(There are other definitions included in Bill 67, the *School Act*, which can be used as reference.)

Background

Accreditation of schools dates back to the 1920's, but the process that most closely resembles its current form began in 1955. From then until the early 70's, the school's performance on provincial examinations was a major factor in accreditation. During this period, students who achieved a certain grade could be recommended by the school, exempting them from writing the provincial examinations. In order to ensure a consistent standard for recommendations, the Ministry of Education established an accreditation process which was largely carried out by school staffs, with reports being submitted by the principal and the district superintendent to a committee of the Ministry.

With the disappearance of provincial examinations in 1974, this reason for accreditation also disappeared. As there were no government examinations, school marks represented the only evaluation of student performance, and the accreditation process in place from 1975 to 1987 was aimed at (1) providing "accountability" by reporting on how well the school was meeting provincial standards, and (2) providing a catalyst for school improvement.

The current secondary accreditation process is the result of a province-wide needs assessment of the concept and the experience of the twenty-five pilots using the revised process in the 1988/89 school year.

The revision reflects the current research literature on the topics of program evaluation, school effectiveness and organization change.

The process is structured following the provincial philosophy as stated in the goals, attributes and the stated purpose of the British Columbia school system in enabling learners.

It is anticipated that the process will continue to be revised so as to remain current with those concepts of the *Legacy for Learners* which are adopted for implementation.

I. The Accreditation Process

Goals of the Accreditation Revision

To emphasize the positive learning outcomes of students.

To focus on the three goals and five attributes of quality schools.

To ensure that school improvement is based on:

- data collection and monitoring
- evaluation of data
- effective follow-up action plans

To use the information from the School Improvement Profiles.

To make the evaluation process more efficient and to improve the accreditation rating system.

To have school improvement processes such as action plans and school improvement plans developed as part of the internal process.

All British Columbia schools enrolling students in the Graduation Program are required to participate in the accreditation process at regular intervals determined by the Ministry of Education.

> ***Accreditation is the status granted to an educational institution or program that has been found to meet or to exceed stated criteria of educational quality.***

Purposes of Accreditation

To recognize and reinforce school strengths.

To ensure that schools meet provincial education standards with respect to the three goals of education:

- **intellectual development**
- **human and social development**
- **career development**

To assist school improvement through a school growth plan to enhance the school's service to students.

To ensure that schools account for their performance to their school boards and the general public.

Guiding Principles

1. Schools have a prime responsibility for the **intellectual development** of students, and a shared responsibility for their **human and social** development, and their **career** development.

2. Schools should exhibit to an appropriate level five necessary attributes as defined by the Ministry:

   Accessibility
   Relevance
   Equity
   Quality
   Accountability

3. Accreditation is intended to lead schools to collect and analyze data from a wide range of areas in order to assess their effectiveness in enabling learning, and in achieving school and system goals.

In each section of the School Document, three basic questions are asked:

- ***What is the state of present practice?***
- ***Is this practice effective?***
- ***If improvement is needed, what should be done?***

Judgments of effectiveness must be made according to standards established by professional and public expectations. The guiding principles and specific statements for each section of the School Document represent these standards. They are drawn from the literature on accreditation, current legislation, curriculum guides, and commonly held precepts for the operation of schools in British Columbia.

Steps in the Accreditation Process

Step One

Internal Self-Assessment

The internal self-assessment is conducted by the school staff and is based on the three goals of education, and the five attributes of the public school system as set forth in the Ministry's Policy Statement on Public Schools.

The completed School Response Document is sent by the school to:
1) the individual members of the External Team
2) the Program Evaluation Branch of the Ministry of Education.

Step Two

External Evaluation

An external evaluation is carried out by a selected team of educators and is intended to:

- validate the internal self-assessment
- recognize the school's strengths in serving students,
- assess the appropriateness of the school growth plan in addressing perceived areas of school weakness.

Step Three

External Evaluation Team's Formal Report

A formal report is prepared for the Ministry of Education.

Step Four

Return Visit by Representatives of the External Evaluation Team

The external team return to the school to discuss the recommendations of the team's report with the school staff, the superintendent of schools and the Board of School Trustees.

Step Five

Implementation of the school growth plan

The school proceeds with the school growth plan with the support of the School District and the Ministry of Education.

Accreditation Status

All schools undergoing the Accreditation Process will receive six-year accreditation status following completion of the process and on the basis of the recommendation of the External Evaluation Team.

The Team may:

1. recommend immediate accreditation to the Ministry.

2. recommend accreditation when a school improvement plan is developed by the school and approved by the Superintendent of Schools.

3. recommend accreditation when members of the External Evaluation Team have returned to the school for a second visit and satisfied themselves that the school growth plan has been effectively addressed.

In all cases, accreditation of schools will be recommended by the External Evaluation Team when the following criteria are met:

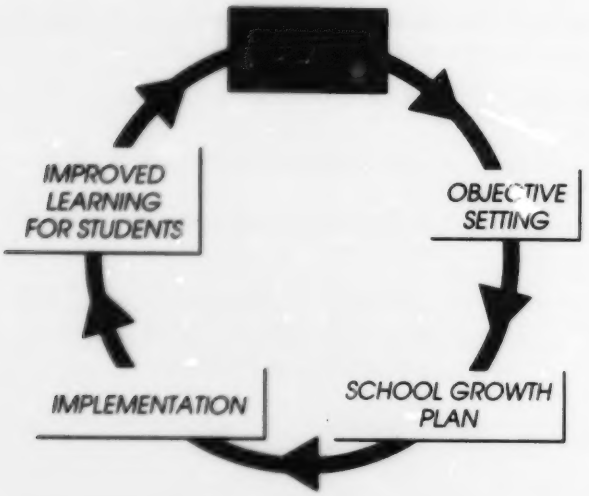
- ***the school is operating satisfactorily in all component sections identified in the Summary***
- ***the school system goals are being met in serving students***
- ***the school effectively demonstrates the attributes are effectively provided for***

  and/or

- ***the school has demonstrated the ability to identify the significant areas requiring improvement and has developed a school growth plan made up of action plans to successfully address these areas.***

The Cycle of Accreditation

School Accreditation is not an event but a process, as the diagram below illustrates:



The school self-assessment, which is really a needs assessment that results in stated objectives expressed in a school growth plan, flows into implementation and an evaluation of that implementation.

The vision is that this process will take place annually, with the formal school self-assessment and the External Team's visit occurring every six years.

II. Roles and Responsibilities in the School Accreditation Process

The Ministry of Education

The Ministry 's role in accreditation includes:

- identification of the schools to take part in the process
- establishment of the process with district officers responsible for accreditation
- orientation of principals, steering committee chairpersons, responsible district officers, and external team chairpersons for the participating schools
- selection of external team chairpersons in consultation with the district and the school
- selection of external teams in consultation with the school and district
- monitoring of school growth plans to ensure that Provincial standards are attained
- regular review of the process
- provision of funding to support the accreditation process and the plans for school growth
- the granting of accreditation status.

The School District

The School District's role includes:

- appointment of a district officer responsible for the accreditation, someone knowledgeable of the process and who will provide support and advice to the participating school(s)
- providing the school(s) with the appropriate funds for its assessment and school growth
- assisting external team members
- reimbursing external team members for their expenses

- determining what additional assistance the external team chairperson might require, e.g., space, secretarial assistance, telephone
- providing a reasonable amount of release time for staff participating on external teams in other school districts
- monitoring and supporting the school growth plan to ensure that the improvement of student learning remains the prime focus.

The Principal

Overall responsibility for accreditation rests with the principal who must work closely with the self-assessment committee and other teachers to establish clear guide-lines for management and communication.

The principal should:

- be knowledgeable about and have a positive attitude towards the worth of accreditation to improve student outcomes
- provide leadership in the development of a consensus reaching process
- determine the method of selection of the self-assessment committee and chairperson in consultation with staff
- be involved in an advisory and consultative manner
- inform the district officer of accreditation progress
- determine the optimum time in the school year for the external team visit
- coordinate and lead the follow-up once the plan for school growth has been developed
- support the staff through encouragement and reassurance.

The External Team

An external team is selected by the Ministry in consultation with the district and comes into the school for a week to validate the appropriateness of the school's internal evaluation, focusing on the Action Plans designed by the school to address its future needs.

The team reviews the Internal Report and discusses the Action Plans with the staff and administration, adding the collective experience and accumulated knowledge of the members of the external team in validating these.

The Team recommends the accreditation status to the Ministry.

The sharing of ideas, as well as the generally confirming and supporting nature of the external team's comments, are what makes this aspect of the accreditation process such a valuable experience.

The Steering Committee

This committee plays a key role in controlling and directing the internal evaluation. It also provides an important link between the External Team and the school staff before, during, and following the Team's visit.

The Steering Committee's responsibilities include:

- setting timelines
- assigning sub-committee tasks and responsibilities
- receiving interim sub-committee and department reports
- ensuring quality and general accuracy of the sub-committee reports.

It is part of the responsibility of the Steering Committee to make sure that responses in the internal report on the level of staff satisfaction have been thoughtfully and carefully obtained, and that these responses are supported by tangible indicators.

It is recommended that the Steering Committee assume responsibility for completing the final summary section after the rest of the booklet has been finished. The Steering Committee will, of course, employ staff input in determining their own summative ratings in this section.

On cooperation with the principal, the Steering Committee can be of great assistance in implemening the School Growth Plan.

Sub-Committees

Formation of sub-committees is the responsibility of the school and the steering committee. Some of these may already be in place to deal with such components as School Mission, School Culture, or Community Relations.

The Leadership/Administration section can be a difficult part of the booklet to respond to with sub-committee assignments. A number of statements lend themselves to sub-committee responses, some relate to the entire staff, and some are most appropriately responded to by the school administrative team. It is suggested that the School Administration and the Steering Committee should meet and discuss how and by whom the responses should be made.

III. COMPLETING THE SCHOOL DOCUMENT

Gathering Information

School Information Profiles

Some of the data to be analysed by the school staff can be found in the School Information Profiles. These profiles are compiled by the Ministry of Education and include data from a variety of sources including: schools and districts, Statistics Canada, and other Ministries.

These profiles contain provincial learning assessment data, provincial examination results, attendance rates, as well as some socio-economic data. The information is listed by individual school, district, and province.

This information, together with other local information, should be used as a starting point for schools to assess their success in the areas of the goals and attributes.

Public Questionnaires

A telephone questionnaire has been developed to assist districts in providing responses to the "public satisfaction" questions of the accreditation document. It will be included with the Accreditation Kit which is supplied to all schools undergoing the accreditation process.

Schools are encouraged to supplement the information gained from the questionnaire. There are many other ways of obtaining information or acquiring community responses. Many schools and districts have in place instruments and processes for identifying community attitudes, and the results of such identification must be available to the external team. In any case, the school is expected to have a clear picture of the students' and the community's perception of the school's service to students. Simple written questionnaires are often useful in soliciting and obtaining student opinion.

Standards

The accreditation book is structured around the three goals and the five attributes of effective schools prescribed in British Columbia. Criteria relating to each goal or attribute are stated in the introductory section of the School Document.

Staffs of schools engaged in accreditation are asked to comment on their success in respect to these criteria. If the staff are dissatisfied with their level of success, they will then develop plans for improvement.

The criteria are substantially learner focused. Each strand/ department will assess, using quantitative information such as student success rates, provincial assessment results, scholarships obtained, as well as their own professional judgment, how well it is delivering educational service.

Teacher Judgment of Program Effectiveness

Beside each criterion is a 4-point Likert scale. This scale is to establish points of view, not to achieve consensus, as there are other ways of doing this.

Teachers are asked to discuss their satisfaction with the degree to which the criterion has been met, and to identify areas of agreement and disagreement.

> *The scale measures the degree to which the staff **are satisfied with how well the criterion has been met**, not the actual level of meeting it.*
>
> *If, for example, student achievement is low in some area with respect to other schools or to the province, but the staff think that the achievement is satisfactory, they would circle a 3 or 4 on the scale. If students are doing well, but staff think they could do better, 1 or 2 may be circled. Under these circumstances, staff would probably want to comment on the apparent disparity.*
>
> *A rating of 4 does not mean unattainable perfection. It should be given for high staff satisfaction relative to the criterion in question. A rating of 1 or 2 would indicate the need to find some way of doing better.*

Indicators/ Comments

Satisfaction levels for each criterion should be based on data provided in the guiding principles for each section. If, however, other information is used to obtain a rating, then this should be recorded in the "Indicator/Comments" section.

Additional indicators should be briefly listed where the school feels that this evidence is necessary. The respondents should feel free to include comments explaining the satisfaction rating given on the response scale.

For example, if the goal in Science is to develop students' creative thinking skills, the school may list "Olympics of the Mind" contests, science fairs, or science contests, which are indicators of student achievements in this specific area of intellectual development. Additional comments should be brief and to the point. These comments can be amplified during ensuing discussions with the External Team Members.

Reaching Consensus

Each section demands judgments about the degree of satisfaction with school outcomes or processes. It should be emphasized that the discussions and assignments of satisfaction levels are intended as formative evaluations to direct the staff to areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.

Since the estimation of satisfaction is unique to each individual, it may be difficult or even impossible to obtain agreement in a strand/department or sub-committee. It may, in some cases, be desirable for a mean score to be shown, as well as the range of responses, thus indicating a healthy circumstance in staff relationships.

Organization

At the time of printing these documents, the future organizational framework of schools has not been decided. Schools have the choice of responding to the Learning Experiences Section of the School Document in either a Four Strand format or a Department (Subject) Format.

The Four Strand format is offered as a choice because:

- it is in line with *Policy Directions 1989*
- it could simplify the process at the school level
- it could simplify the process when the External Team visits the school.

Action Plans

Schools are asked to provide details of action plans, and are encouraged to comment on them. If a school can demonstrate that there is no need for improvement in a specific area, improvement plans are not required.

Following this section of the Guide, there is a sample Action Plan Worksheet which schools may find useful in setting out their action plans. While it is not necessary to use this specific format, action plans should be complete and include the following components:

- the objective stated in clear and measurable terms
- implications for staff development
- resources required, responsibilities, time lines, indicators of success
- some estimate of cost.

The School Growth Plan consists of all the action plans taken together.

Attachments:

Where information is requested, a reference to a handbook or to some other source document is all that is necessary. The internal evaluation booklet should be kept to a minimum size and should not become the repository of unnecessary attachments. As long as the External Team has access to school handbooks, policy books, reports, etc., a simple reference to these is all that is required in the response documents.

Locally Developed Courses:

As there is no specific section for these in the response documents, they are intended to be dealt with in the Strand and/or Department in which they logically belong.

Note that the External Team will be interested in reviewing the process by which Locally Developed Courses come into being, are approved, reviewed and evaluated.

Career Preparation

This section is to be completed by any department offering a career preparation program.

Summary

This section is a summative evaluation of school outcomes and processes. The Steering Committee has a responsibility to examine the data and the responses throughout the booklet, and then to determine the level of satisfaction in the summary according to the general guiding principles.

An important part of the Summary section is that dealing with the school growth plan to address areas of perceived weakness.

APPENDIX I

STRAND/DEPARTMENT _____

ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

OBJECTIVE (Measurable Action Statement):

_____

_____

_____

Strategies	Staff Development Component	Resources Needed	Person Responsible	Target Date Start	Finish	Evaluation	Cost

APPENDIX TWO: PREPARING SCHOOL INFORMATION FOR THE EXTERNAL TEAM VISIT

The booklet provided for the External Team should not include more than is presented in the official copy sent to the Ministry. The place to present any additional materials is in the room set aside for the External Team. Materials should be clearly labelled and may include such things as the following as well as any other significant information that the school has available.

- √ School map
- √ Bell schedule
- √ Course outlines
- √ Staff/Student handbook(s)
- √ Clippings from local newspaper(s)
- √ Course selection guides
- √ Staff list showing F.T.E. and teaching assignment
- √ Timetable update - with enrolment in each class
- √ Room schedule
- √ School newspaper - student publications
- √ School/Staff newsletters
- √ Map of community
- √ Names/addresses/phone numbers of community agencies/clubs (for school and community survey)
- √ Supervision/evaluation criteria / process
- √ District philosophy/goals statement
- √ District evaluation criteria (teachers/principals)
- √ Budget breakdown
- √ Student fee schedule
- √ Actual F.T.E. enrolment by grade and gender
- √ Last internal and external accreditation reports and any follow-up documents
- √ Lists of scholarship winners, provincial and other, over the last five years; other honours attained by students
- √ Name/address/phone number of contact person on Parent Council
- √ School profile
- √ School Policy Handbook
- √ District Policy Handbook

APPENDIX THREE: ADVICE REGARDING RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA.

Experience suggests that if, at the beginning of the process, the local media are aware of the purpose of school accreditation and have been involved in an informed and cooperative manner, they can be strong supporters of the process and of schools undertaking it.

Suggestions for developing media support:

- on initial contact with the school principal, the chairperson of the External Team should discuss the current involvement of the local media in the process of accreditation.

- the school principal may want to refer to descriptions found in the *Guide to B.C. School Accreditation* as an aide to describing the process accurately.

- the chairperson of the External Team may arrange to meet with local media representatives during the week of the team's visit.

- the principal should arrange to have copies of newspaper clippings, news releases, etc., about the accreditation available for the External Team as part of its package of information provided at the school.

APPENDIX FOUR: INFORMATION ON FUNDING FOR BUILDING MAINTENANCE AND UPGRADING

From time to time External Evaluation Teams find that they have to comment on building maintenance and upgrading, but need information on the sources of funding for such activities in order to make appropriate recommendations. The following may be helpful in providing such information.

There are four primary sources of funding for the different aspects of building maintenance and upgrading:

- Non Shareable Capital
- Building Operations and Maintenance Funds (Function 5)
- Shareable Capital Allowance
- Annual Capital Plan

1. **Non Shareable Capital** funds are raised through local taxation. These funds are used largely at the discretion of the district, but capital expenditures must be in accordance with the definition of "Capital Expenses" contained in the *School Act* (Part 1, Section 1). For example, Non Shareable Capital Funds can be expended for such things as site improvements, equipment, vehicles, and minor renovations.

2. **Building Operations and Maintenance** funds are customarily expended on the general maintenance and upkeep of buildings in accordance with the definition of "Operating Expenses" contained in the *School Act* (Part 1, Section 1). Minor alterations of buildings can be done from the Maintenance Budget depending, of course, upon school board policy.

3. **Shareable Capital Allowance** funds are included in the Fiscal Framework and are intended to be used to extend the life of school buildings. Projects that may be funded from the Shareable Capital Allowance include:

    - roof membrane replacement
    - mechanical system upgrade
    - electrical system upgrade
    - functional improvements
    - upgrading of exterior and interior finishes
    - loss prevention

4. The **Annual Capital Plan** is the source of both minor (less than $1.1 million) and major (greater than $1.1 million) capital projects. Items funded in this category would include new schools, additions, site purchases, major renovations and replacements of school buildings. The Ministry of Education ranks Capital Projects for treatment as high priority according to the following criteria:

    - projects required to correct unsafe conditions or to prevent major deterioration of the facility.
    - new instruction space when enrolment projections two years in the future exceed present school capacity by 50 or more students.

- additions and/or alterations required to accommodate prescribed educational programs.
- additions and/or alterations required to accommodate supplementary special education needs.
- equipment allowance for approved visually and/or hearing impaired students.
- new bus requirements.
- major sprinkler or alarm projects recommended in the most recent inspection report.
- site acquisition supported by enrolment projections for four years in the future.

SECONDARY ACCREDITATION SERVICE LEVELS AND COST FACTS

Year 1 - Steering Committee

- $2,500.00
- 4 Committee Members - 5 sub-days per member
- schools of 901+ receive one additional sub-day per member
- support (Clerical) time - 15 days

External Team

- one team member per 100 full time students with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 7 members (including Chairperson)
- 5 substitute days per team member
- 5 travel units per member
- 1 assessment travel unit per returnee

Year 2 - Implementation of School Growth Plan (for use over 5 years)

Funding is also provided as part of the fiscal framework for accredited schools to implemnt a plan of school growth. This is a key component of the new process and a significant response to the widespread concern of the past regarding support for school accreditation. This funding is provided in the year of a specific school's accreditation only, but can be dispersed by the district to support the school's growth plan over an extended period.

- 10 sub-days per FTE pupils.

Cost Factor:

- Substitutre cost $100/day
- Clerical day $70
- Assessment travel unit $100.00

Reference: Ministry of Education
Information Circular
#333 89/04/06